1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

The Barlamomo occupy a similar position in relation to the Murngin. The Dai and Barlamomo can hardly be ranked as tribes, except that the terms are loosely used by the natives for groups of clans belonging to either moiety; and since they cannot be phratries and belong to both groups of the dual division, and since there is a vague recognition of their distinctiveness in their having names and being considered by the people to the north as each one people, they have been ranked as tribes by the writer, with full recognition that such a designation is too ample and solid a term to describe them.

The Djawark and Darlwongo clans sometimes are included among the Dai; the Marderpa group may be classed as Dai, Murngin, or Ritarngo, according to the feeling of the people within the clan or those without who distinguish them.

Within the region east of the Yandjinung, Burera, Djinba, and Ritarngo tribes, and including the peoples known as Yaernungo, Dai, Barlamomo, and Murngin, there is considerable linguistic homogeneity. All the peoples included in the latter four tribes can understand the various dialectic variations found throughout the area. The greatest divergence in dialect is among the Yaernungo, but the Liaalaomir of the Goyder River on the one hand, and the Wanguri and Warumeri of Arnhem Bay on the other, also present considerable variation in speech. The peoples belonging to the tribes in the area mentioned above cannot understand the languages of the other tribes along their borders unless they have learned them as separate tongues. Linguistic ability is very marked among all these people. It would be difficult to find a Murngin adult who could not speak three or four languages, and frequently men speak seven and eight.

There is greater difference between these northern languages of Australia than there is between French and English. The Burera have the most divergent tongue and are definitely affiliated linguistically with the more western peoples such as the Gun-wing-u and Maung.

As will be seen from the map, the Murngin have many more clans than the other tribes. It cannot be stated as a definite hypothesis, but very likely that the group of the Murngin associated together under the moiety "linguistic" terms as Djambarpingu and Koparpingu are one people and differentiated from the rest of the Murngin. When asked to what people they belong, they always reply Djambarpingu or Koparpingu, according to the moiety. The clans usually classed as belonging to the two groups are:

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

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The upper panel of Pl. 94D represents the mangrove swamps, intersected by fresh-water streams, lines of lozenge-shaped designs. The transverse panel, *a*, is the aboriginal path from Port Bradshaw to Caledon Bay, and the footprints those of *Nalili*. The lozenge shapes on the lower panel are salt-water areas, and the parallel lines between, sand-hills on the sea coast.

Nguru-gujameri and his Wife, Njinpili-lingou

At one time a mythical *jiritja* man, *Nguru-gujameri*, and his wife, *Njinpili-lingou*, lived at Djerakoi, near Cape Shield.

One day *Nguru-gujameri* and a companion, *Ikawunga*, were spearing fish in a mangrove swamp when they noticed a number of crab-holes around the base of a tree, and the many tracks made by the creatures as they ran from one hole to another. *Nguru-gujameri* suggested to his companion, *Ikawunga*, that they should make a painting of the crab-holes and the marks of the *gunjun* crabs, so that they could keep the design for themselves.[91] The two men did this, but before they died they showed the design to some young men of their group so that the memory of it would not be lost. Since then the design has been passed from father to son. No other aboriginal is allowed to paint these marks without the owner's permission.

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Two paintings illustrate the myth of *Nguru-gujameri* and *Njinpili-lingou*.

On Pl. 95A the upper panel pictures the sea and the lower, the land. The overall pattern of the upper panel is the crab-holes and tracks of the crab, *gunjun*, which formed the design mentioned in the myth.

In the right-hand squares are four cormorants, *madu*, in black. One of them is standing on a rock. The two squares on the extreme right contain two parrot-fish which were too large for the cormorants to swallow. The four grey reef herons, *kaulau-pithit*, in the centre and left, lived on the sand-crabs, *gunjun*. In the lower right panels are six emus and three yams, and in the left, five emus and their footprints. The curious sixth design in the left-hand panel is a cockatoo in flight. The emus and cockatoos depicted on the lower panels are the same as those disturbed by the woman, *Njinpili-lingou*.

In the upper right of Pl. 95C, *Nguru-gujameri* is standing on a rock, spearing fish. He has a string of three in his left hand and has transfixed another with the spear held in his right. The narrow cross-hatched vertical band between *Nguru-gujameri* and the upper left panel, *b*, is the tree, mentioned in the myth, around the base of which *Ikawunga* and *Nguru-gujameri* saw the crab-holes. In panel *b* the crab-holes are indicated by dots at the junction of the series of wavy lines, and the marks made in the mud by the feet of the crabs by the many short straight lines. In the lower left-hand corner of the same panel are the holes and tracks made by the *gunjun* crabs.

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91. This design, like others in the Yirrkalla series (Fig. 63), belongs exclusively to a language group, or *mala*, of aborigines. This myth explains the origin of one of those designs which has not been identified.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

CHAPTER SEVEN

Languages, Signs, and Smoke-Signals

197 POPULAR opinion has it that all aborigines speak one language, and I have often been asked if I can 'speak aboriginal'. Actually, there are scores of different tribal languages throughout Australia, and within these there are hundreds of horde-dialects. In the 34,000 square miles of Arnhem Land there are five distinct languages, one for each of the [621] five groups of hordes, and as there are between a dozen and forty hordes in each horde-group, there are well over a hundred dialects in this small part of Australia.

[114] [621] In the group that I knew best, which extended from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, there were thirty-five hordes, each speaking its own dialect. If you had mastered one of them, Yulengor a few miles away probably could not have understood you. I found that when members of these 191 widely separated hordes met, they could not make themselves 197 understood in their own dialects, but experimented on several till they found one familiar to both parties.

Stone Age men are born linguists, and not only is their speech grammatically correct, but youths amuse themselves by conversing in some little-known dialect. Old Wonggu [522] occasionally introduced a Macassar sentence into ordinary conversation so as to puzzle me, and he would enjoy his joke in using this dialect learnt fifty years previously from East Indian traders. English words and phrases, as well as pidgin English, have occasionally been picked up from traders and beachcombers.

177 191 Since it should be easier for one white man to learn an

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

aboriginal dialect than for several hundred nomads to learn English, I arranged with two youths to teach me. But until I constantly practised the local dialect on them I found that they were learning English much faster than I was learning their tongue. In their anxiety to learn English, they said that it would be quicker for me to teach them than for me to bother to learn aboriginal; moreover, I would eventually go back to my own people, and they would then have to start all over again and teach my successor.

If good English is spoken to the aboriginal he learns it with an ability and speed that makes the use of pidgin English absurd. No one knows where pidgin English originated, but the term 'pidgin' is thought to be a Chinese corruption of the word 'business'. Through the years there has been a local fungus-development of an Australian pidgin-jargon, in which occur such travesties of speech as 'blackfellow', 'gin', 'lubra', 'thinkin', 'savvy', 'sitdown', 'alonga', and 'gammon'; and these in turn have been reinforced by still more hybrid phrases and transplanted by traders throughout the South Pacific.

At Goulburn Island where a school had been established for twenty years, a Government doctor was making an inspection and singled out an old woman for further attention. Turning to her son, the doctor loosed a flood of pidgin which I failed to follow, but I gathered that he wanted to know how long her fingers had been doubled up. The heavy silence was broken by the boy saying, in perfectly modulated English: 'I beg your pardon, doctor?' Fortunately the medico had a sense of humour and his laughter cleared the way for a successful inquiry in English. Recently a naval patrol vessel anchored off Goulburn Island, and an officer questioned a youth in pidgin. The boy said in surprise: 'Excuse me, sir, are you a "new Australian"?'

In writing the dialect, I found that several English consonants were not needed and the ordinary alphabet had to be